



# GREENSBORO URBAN AREA

## Metropolitan Planning Organization

### TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of June 25, 2003

3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room

(County Commissioners' Briefing Room)  
Old Guilford County Courthouse

#### TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Robbie Perkins	Greensboro City Council
Keith Holliday	Mayor of Greensboro
Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council

#### ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO
Scott Rhine	PART	Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO
Fred Fontana	Guilford Co. Transportation	Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO
Mike Mills	NCDOT Division 7	Philip Kempf	GDOT/MPO
Mark E. Kirstner	Guilford Co. Planning Dept.	Tom Brown	Mayor, Town of Oak Ridge
Susan Bridges-Smith	Guilford Co. Planning Dept.	Allen Purser	GSO Chamber of Commerce
Tom Martin	Greensboro Planning Dept.	Paul Muschick	<i>Greensboro News &amp; Record</i>
Bill Ball	Tindale-Oliver & Associates		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

In order to enable Bill Ball to leave early, the meeting began with his presentation of the Mobility Greensboro Update. The scheduled sequence of agenda items resumed thereafter.

## **Business Items**

### **1. Mobility Greensboro Update**

Libby James informed the Committee that the Mobility Greensboro study began in October of 2002 and is well underway. She then introduced Bill Ball, who informed the Committee that his presentation would provide an overview of the current status of the study, what progress has been made, and what the next steps will be over upcoming months. Much of the project is a visioning process that consists of various public involvement activities, which have provided good insights into public perceptions among both users and non-users, as to where GTA is now, how they feel the system should evolve over the next 10 to 20 years, and what steps will be needed to achieve that transformation.

The first Consensus Workshop among GTA users was held on March 27, at the Central Library, and included 38 participants. After a brief overview the participants were divided into small study groups, each with a specific issue and related questions to explore. The results of this workshop indicate a clear convergence of sentiments regarding GTA's strengths and weaknesses among the several study groups. Primary strengths included GTA's new service hours, the effectiveness of its staff and board, the effectiveness of its main routes, and its courteous drivers. Key weaknesses included a lack of information, the frequency of service on routes, lack of enough direct routes. The groups also looked at 10 and 20 year goals for GTA. Among the 10 year goals were changing the ridership composition through a greater emphasis on choice-riders, pursuing a regional approach to service provision, and greater coordination with schools and universities. Twenty year goals included exploring the potential for a light rail system, expanding the coverage area of current routes and services, and increasing overall ridership levels. Participants were also asked to discuss options for future transit funding. Among the preferred sources were a vehicle registration fee, an increase to the portion of the property tax mileage rate that is devoted to transit, and an increase in fares.

Public outreach is another important component of the study. Public outreach activities to date have included meetings with homeowners' associations and business owners, as well as the on-board rider surveys. Over 2,000 responses to this survey have been received. Results are still being compiled, but so far there is a strong correlation with the results of the consensus workshop. Preliminary plans and options are now being developed that will be presented at the second Consensus Workshop. The range of options will include recommendations on technology and infrastructure upgrades, security improvements, marketing strategies, service improvements, capital needs, financing structure, and staffing needs. The second workshop, covering logistics of the transit system, will be held at the newly renovated Depot on Thursday, September 11, from 4 to 8 pm.

Jim Westmoreland informed the Committee that GDOT was looking into replacing the City's signal system and how the new system would interface with GTA's existing and planned bus technologies. GDOT is also working to leverage funding sources to fund the Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) system that is currently an unfunded MTIP project.

Libby James informed the Committee that the Depot re-opening ceremony will be held on Friday, August 29 from 10 am to noon, and that all TAC members would receive an invitation.

## **Action Items**

### **1. Approve Minutes of May 28, 2003**

Robbie Perkins moved for approval of the minutes. Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

### **2. Final MTIP 2004 – 2010 and Conformity Determination Report**

Jeff Sovich advised that the 2004 – 2010 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program has been under development for nearly two years. The MPO has followed the procedures outlined by FHWA, including the 30 day public comment period for the Conformity Determination Report. The public comment period for that document ended on Friday, June 20; no public comments were. The CDR formally states that the MTIP is consistent with the LRTP and the valid Conformity Analysis and that the proper process has been followed in preparing the MTIP. The Board of Transportation adopted the final Statewide Transportation Improvement Program earlier this month, so it is now time for the MPO to take action on the MTIP. The MTIP includes tables listing major project changes, and a new project update newsletter is available, which summarizes the status of key projects in the MPO. Once the MTIP is adopted by the MPO, it will be submitted for approval by the Board of Transportation in July. Following that action the MTIP will be submitted for approval by the Federal Highway Administration. The 04 – 10 MTIP will take effect on October 1, 2003. The requested action is to approve the Final MTIP and Conformity Determination Report as presented.

Bob Landreth moved to approve the Final MTIP and the Conformity Determination Report; Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Final MTIP and Conformity Determination Report.

### **3. Revised Metropolitan Area Boundary**

Jeff Sovich advised that Greensboro MPO staff, in coordination with Burlington-Graham MPO staff, have identified certain inconsistencies in the Metropolitan Area Boundary, where the two MPOs are contiguous. Staff intended to present this item for the Committee today, but discussions with Burlington-Graham staff are still underway. Consequently, this item will be presented in full at a later meeting.

## **Business Items (Continued)**

### **2. Gallimore Dairy Extension Update**

Tyler Meyer informed the Committee that this proposed project would extend Gallimore Dairy Road from its current endpoint at West Market Street to West Friendly Avenue. The purpose of this project is to eliminate the need for a dog-leg traffic movement through the area for motorists accessing the western Urban Loop from I-40. This route is a cause for concern, especially in future years, because with the recent opening of the Gallimore Dairy Road interchange on I-40, traffic on Gallimore Dairy Road has increased. Traffic volumes are expected to increase further with the opening of the Urban Loop in this vicinity in 2006, primarily because there will be no Urban Loop interchange at West Market Street. The likely result is that more traffic will access the Urban Loop via Gallimore Dairy Road and West Friendly Avenue. This project is intended to address this future roadway capacity issue.

Several years ago, the MPO requested NCDOT to prepare a feasibility study for this project. The project was also included the MPO's Priority Needs list for the 2002 – 2008 MTIP. At the time, the specific request was that a project be created to construct this extension of Gallimore Dairy Road. NCDOT has recently completed its feasibility study of this project, and issued a letter informing MPO officials and others of the results. Two alternatives were evaluated: an extension of Gallimore Dairy Road through a tunnel under the runway of Piedmont Triad International Airport; and improvements to the intersections of West Market Street with Gallimore Dairy Road and West Friendly Avenue. The tunnel option was estimated to cost approximately \$31.1 million, \$1.7 million of which would cover right-of-way acquisition. The intersection improvements option, which included auxiliary turn lanes and other enhancements, was estimated to cost approximately \$2 million, \$500,000 of which would cover right-of-way acquisition. Considering these costs and the expected level of benefit from the projects, NCDOT recommended that the intersection improvements option be pursued.

There is also a third alternative that was not assessed by the study, that involves an at-grade extension of Gallimore Dairy Road. This option was not considered because the road would conflict with a planned extension of the airport runway. A possible solution to this conflict would be to route the Gallimore Dairy Road Extension beyond the current runway overrun zone. The facility could then be tunneled later if the runway is ever extended. The at-grade extension option is estimated to cost approximately \$3.5 million, with \$1.3 million covering right-of-way acquisition. The findings of this study will be considered further and the potential for an at-grade facility will be explored. Robbie Perkins suggested another alternative in which West Friendly Avenue is extended across West Market Street and then tied back in with either Gallimore Dairy Road or Burnt Poplar Road. This alternative could include a grade separation under the railroad tracks and would avoid crossing the airport property. He expressed concern that in the long term this area will become a serious problem if not addressed soon. Tyler Meyer stated that GDOT would investigate this option.

### **3. Implementation Guidance on NCGS 136-200.4**

Tyler Meyer advised that North Carolina General Statutes 136-200.4 relates to the state-required MPO review of boundaries, structure and governance. This particular section requires that in areas designated as non-attainment, contiguous MPOs must consult with each other, develop appropriate emissions reductions strategies, and incorporate those strategies into their respective long range transportation plans. The goal of this statute is effective consultation among MPOs and identification of appropriate regional air quality strategies. There are significant sanctions attached to this requirement, which allow NCDOT to withhold all state matching funds for federal aid roadway projects, state matching funds for public transportation projects, and CMAQ funds, which are intended to construct improvements that improve air quality. In the statute, these very harsh sanctions are tied to a failure by contiguous MPOs to consult and develop appropriate emissions reduction strategies.

Major concerns were voiced among MPOs in response to NCDOT's implementation guidance, issued in March. In that interpretation, the sanctions would have been imposed upon MPOs for failure to demonstrate conformity, rather than failure to consult. This approach was troubling because there are numerous factors that can cause an MPO to be out of conformity that are unrelated to a failure to consult or ineffective transportation planning. When this issue was first raised, the TAC took action asking NCDOT to consult with MPOs to develop a more acceptable interpretation of this provision that would meet the goals of the statute, support a productive MPO planning process, and do so in a way that wouldn't impact funding for exempt transportation projects beyond the penalties already provided for in federal statutes. Other MPOs and NCAMPO raised similar concerns.

NCDOT has consulted with MPOs. Staff from Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham, Charlotte and other large MPOs met with Janet D'Ignazio and Roger Sheats on June 2 to discuss interpretation of this statute. The group agreed that further discussion and work were needed to develop a policy that would effectively implement the law, and a technical working group was created to develop recommendations for that policy. Teleconference discussions among the technical group have begun, with the goal of finalizing recommendations and issuing revised implementation guidance by August. One positive step in this process is that NCDOT has withdrawn from its previous stance that made conformity the trigger for the sanctions, and instead, has moved toward making failure to consult the trigger. Further information will be provided as discussions proceed and the policy is developed. One additional point is that the Triad MPOs have already developed a draft regional air quality strategy that could be refined in the future to meet the provisions of this statute, as the MPOs move through the process of updating their long range transportation plans.

#### **4. Guilford County Comprehensive Plan**

Mark Kirstner introduced Susan Bridges-Smith, a new planner with Guilford County Planning, who would be performing some daily coordination on the development of the comprehensive plan. He then informed the Committee that the County's comprehensive plan effort is in very early stages. A new plan is needed because the current plan was adopted in 1986. Although the County has been successful in implementing this plan, changes in the community, such as the Urban Loop and the Federal Express hub, along with new trends in planning practice have combined to make the existing plan outdated. In addition, there is a public perception that growth in the County is uncontrolled, while elected officials are caught between various competing perspectives regarding land development and property rights.

The current comprehensive plan project began with a proposal by Commissioner Yow in April of 2001, which was passed by a vote of eleven to zero. The Commission directive included updating the plan every five years and appropriated funds for the project over fiscal years 2002 and 2003. The planning department sought Commissioner input to ensure that the planning process and end product reflects their intentions. As a result, a clear and concise mission statement for the plan has been developed. In February, a revised consultant contract for the project was approved by the Commission. Project kick-off has been completed and intergovernmental coordination has been initiated, which will gather input from 22 jurisdictions and keep them informed of progress.

In several key aspects, the Guilford County Comprehensive Plan will not be a traditional land use plan. The plan will include a strong emphasis on evaluating the provision of public services and the relationships between those services and growth patterns throughout the County. Several potential growth scenarios will be developed and evaluated, but although the process will not promote any particular scenario, it is likely that one will emerge which is preferable for meeting plan objectives. Economic development and employment growth will also be an important component of the plan. The Plan will be developed with a countywide focus, in which existing municipal plans and county area plans are included as given conditions within the growth scenarios. Consequently, the ultimate outcome will be determined as the process unfolds. The staff's goal in this process will be to develop a plan document that will enable elected officials to make informed decisions and the potential consequences of those decisions.

Data collection for the Plan is underway and will continue through Winter of 2003. The process will continue with a range of public input opportunities, beginning with stakeholder interviews in July, public involvement meetings starting in August, and a Citizen Advisory Committee, extending from September 2003 through May 2004. The completion target for the Plan is Fall 2004, with fiscal impacts

due to Plan implementation and changes to County services likely to be seen in the fiscal year 2005-06 budget. The Plan deliverables will include a written document and a customizable CD-ROM format that can be configured for various types of users, such as businesses, planners, developers, educators, citizens, and individuals interested in relocating into the County.

Tyler Meyer asked what sort of land use map would be produced for the Plan. Mark Kirstner stated that there would be a generalized land use map, which would probably not be as detailed as those in municipal plans, or in the County's area plans.

## **5. Guilford County Transportation Department Update**

Fred Fontana advised that for many years, Guilford County's official position was that transportation, especially public transportation, is an urban issue and made no effort to address transportation. In 1996-1997 the County Planning Department was receiving funds from NCDOT and undertook a county-wide transportation development plan, which recommended the creation of an independent county transportation department. In July 1998, a transportation department was created.

Currently, the department serves five main groups of clients. The first group consists of Medicaid recipients who reside in Guilford County. This service includes transportation to doctors' appointments. The Transportation Department does not own any vehicles, but acts as a provider to the Social Services Department through contractors and other municipal or county transportation providers. Approximately 12,000 trips per month are provided for the County's 38,000 Medicaid recipients, an increase from 5,000 trips per month when the service began in January, 1999.

The second largest group of clients transported is the elderly. The primary destinations include congregate meal sites and senior centers in both High Point and Greensboro, employment for working seniors, shopping, and orientation facilities for elderly immigrants. The number of standing order trips provided to the elderly ranges from 150 to 175 trips a day.

The third largest group transported is the disabled population. This program is not countywide. Only county residents that live outside the city limits of High Point and Greensboro are eligible. The county bases eligibility on the fact that the two large cities provide ADA complementary paratransit, even though that service is limited to riders who live within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of a fixed route, in accordance with ADA requirements. The Guilford County Transportation provides this service throughout the rest of the county, provided that the trip either originates or terminates outside Greensboro and High Point city limits.

The fourth group transported is the rural general public. These are residents that live outside of the city limits who need to get to work, to the doctor or to school. Various funding sources allow transportation services for the Medicaid and elderly clients to be provided free of charge. The disabled and the rural general public are charged \$1.60 per one way trip.

The fifth group of clients are served through a small program called Work First Transitional Transportation, developed by the State DOT. This program is for residents who were previously receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, who are now working at least 20 hours per week. This service is a safety net that provides financial assistance for these residents get to work.

The department also has an inter-local agreement with the City of Greensboro, through which the department provides the call-taking, scheduling, and routing for their SCAT clients. The city helps subsidize the salary for three employees in the department's office to schedule the trips.

The final service provided by the department is a program which has developed in the past year and a half, with the assistance of PART and NCDOT. The Guilford County Department of Transportation is the lead agency in coordinating the out-of-county non-emergency medical transportation throughout the PART service area. A web site is now available where individuals, doctors' offices, social service agencies, and transportation officials can schedule a trip on-line.

Overall, the department schedules an average of 900 trips per day for its own clients and another 500 trips per day for SCAT clients. The demand for Medicaid and ADA transportation services is growing rapidly with significant associated costs. Through improvements to the routing operations, the department has enabled a greater share of Medicaid users to be served by lower-cost fixed-route buses, instead of the more costly demand-responsive vans and taxis, thereby saving the Medicaid program over \$100,000 per year. The department's total annual budget is around \$3 million.

Jim Westmoreland asked if the rural general public transportation program offers transportation anywhere within Guilford County. Fred Fontana advised that the service is available anywhere within Guilford County, although it is primarily intended for employment, medical, or school purposes.

## **6. MPO Strategic Reports**

Tyler Meyer advised that in a previous TAC meeting, Mayor Holliday had asked Doug Galyon what the effects the southern Urban Loop would have on traffic on I-40. NCDOT's Statewide Planning Branch has estimated that approximately 50 to 55,000 vehicles per day would be diverted from I-40 to the southern Urban Loop by 2015. At that time, I-40 would carry around 110,000 vehicles per day, while the southern Urban Loop would carry between 81 and 90,000 vehicles per day. Mayor Holliday stated that his office has sent letters out to the owners of businesses located along I-40, which potentially would be affected by the I-85 bypass. The letter informs these business owners that approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the traffic will be reduced when the I-85 bypass opens.

Jim Westmoreland informed the Committee that GDOT recently received a municipal agreement from NCDOT regarding upgrading noise walls on two sections of the Western Urban Loop to brick noise walls. The estimated cost of these upgrades is \$721,000. The agreement requests the City of Greensboro to pay the additional amount, but it is not clear where the request for this municipal agreement originated, or whether the proper process for such a request has been followed. The request also does not state the length of the noise walls for which the cost estimate was prepared. GDOT will investigate this item to determine whether this would be an appropriate expense relative to other capacity and safety related needs. The TAC will need to have some future discussion and debate on the priority for such aesthetic improvements. Sandy Carmany suggested planting ivy or other types of vines on the noise walls could be a more cost-effective approach to improving their appearance, as well as enhancing their noise-muffling properties. Doug Galyon stated that the Board of Transportation may be able to provide funding for landscaping improvements associated with the noise walls.

Tyler Meyer advised that a public meeting on the Battleground Rail Trail will be held on Thursday, June 26 at Lawndale Baptist Church from 7 to 9 pm. This project follows Battleground Avenue, from Markland Drive to Pisgah Church Road, through a congested corridor with significant residential and commercial development. This trail will provide an important link between the Lake Brandt Trail to the north and other trails leading into downtown Greensboro.

The time, date, and location for a public meeting on the Groometown Road widening project will soon be announced. This is a combined public meeting regarding the findings of the preliminary design and environmental assessment for the project. Construction is scheduled for 2005.

Although it was expected that the Thoroughfare Plan amendments adopted by the TAC in May would be on the agenda for the Board of Transportation's July meeting, it now appears that this crucial step will be delayed to the August BOT meeting.

### **Other Items**

#### **1. Board Member Report**

Doug Galyon reported that Southern Urban Loop is unlikely to be open by the December target date and construction will probably continue into the early spring. The delay is the result of unusually wet weather conditions.

Mike Mills advised that the resurfacing efforts on West Friendly Avenue and West Market Street would begin on June 26 and be completed within 3 weeks. Mayor Holliday expressed concern about the delays in completion of these projects, explaining that citizens tolerate roadwork and associated inconveniences if progress is evident, but grow impatient when no work is being done during fair weather.

Mike Mills stated that the widening of I-40 from Holden Road to Chimney Rock Road is expected to be completed in July, while completion of the segment from Sandy Ridge Road to Chimney Rock Road is anticipated in the Fall of 2003.

#### **2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns**

Mayor Tom Brown of Oak Ridge inquired as to the status of installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of NC 68 and NC 150, which was to be completed this month. Mike Mills stated that the town requested a metal mast arm for this signal, which must be fabricated to match the specifications dictated by the site. This signal installation has been delayed because the shop that fabricates the mast arms is currently running on a back order of 4 to 6 months. Mayor Brown also inquired about the possibility of installing a left-turn arrow at this intersection for traffic moving westbound on NC 150, turning left onto southbound NC 68. Mike Mills stated that some improvements are already planned for this intersection, and that this item could be incorporated into the project. Doug Galyon stated that he would try to obtain small urban funds to support this request.

#### **3. Regional Transportation News**

Scott Rhine informed the Committee that on Thursday, June 26, PART's offices will be relocating from Piedmont Triad International Airport to 7800 Airport Center Drive, Suite 102.



PART has been awarded CMAQ funds for construction of its regional park and ride lots. Three zones have been established for placement of the lots, but exact locations have not yet been selected for all the lots. PART will contract soon for the environmental work on this project. More information will be presented at future meetings.

PART is participating in a value pricing study of the widened I-40 corridor through Greensboro. The study is being managed by North Carolina A&T State University and funded by the US Department of Transportation, through NCDOT. The study team also includes University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The study will explore options for implementing High Occupancy Vehicle lanes, toll lanes and other operational strategies. The first phase consists of data collection, the second phase will evaluate the engineering issues and feasibility, and the third phase will consist of public input and outreach

PART Express ridership has reached approximately 500 trips per day and PART is currently working on extending service to Oak Hollow Mall, Four Seasons Mall, and the Koury Center, while expanding weekend services.

#### **4. Wrap-Up**

None.

The TAC adjourned at 4:40 p.m.